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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

6 October 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Consequences of a Takeover of the Government of Pakistan by President Mirza

1. Pakistani President Mirza has informed the American Embassy in Karachi that he plans to take over the Government of Pakistan on 8 October. Mirza claims to have the support of General Ayub and the Army for his plan, and that if he does not act, the Army will. He indicated that his purpose is to end the instability caused by recent political maneuvering in the country. It should be kept in mind that most of our information on the situation has come from Mirza himself, and its validity remains to be tested. In particular, we do not know what Ayub's thinking may be, nor what his estimate is of the reliability of the Army.

2. Mirza has several times in the past expressed his intention to institute authoritarian rule, but his plans have never reached the point that now appears to be the case. However, the Army or some elements of it may refuse to support the plan, and he might be dissuaded by a strong injunction from the US. In addition, knowledge of his intentions has apparently already leaked out and may lead to moves to forestall Mirza's plans.

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Consequences of a Takeover by Mirza

3. Internal: With the united support of the Army, Mirza could almost certainly take control of the country and hold it together for some time. However, violent resistance might break out. In order to assure the success of the takeover, Mirza might arrest such key opposition leaders as Moslem League President Qaiyum Khan, Awami League President Suhrawardy, and National Awami Party leaders Maulana Bashani and Abdul Ghaffer Khan. This would probably hamper opposition activities, but would not necessarily prevent violence. Mirza would be able to profit from a certain amount of support -- or at least acceptance -- by many officials and businessmen who have been increasingly disgusted by the lack of responsibility displayed by most of the politicians in recent months. Political figures with a popular following in the country, however, would probably refuse to acquiesce in Mirza's takeover or to associate themselves with Mirza for fear of losing their support.

4. Over the longer run, however, we believe a Mirza dictatorship would probably be unable to maintain stability in Pakistan. Mirza, despite his occupancy of the Presidency, is not well-equipped to run a stable and efficient dictatorship. He lacks popular support almost completely, partly as a result of his open contempt for East Pakistan and his partiality toward his own minority Shia community. He has shown

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little evidence to date of the capability to devise a comprehensive program or take vigorous action in support of his ideas. His ability to retain the support of the civil and military services indefinitely is also doubtful and he would be likely eventually to lose power to the Army. In addition, there is a deep and widespread desire among the Pakistani public for an election after ten years of nationhood, and indefinite postponement of the election would almost certainly spur increasing unrest, especially in East Pakistan.

5. External: It is unlikely that there would be any significant change in foreign policy under a Mirza dictatorship, especially since the civil and military services on whom he would have to depend, are keenly conscious of Pakistan's dependency on the West. However, it would be generally believed that the US was behind Mirza's seizure of power and opposition to him would also be directed toward the US and the policy of associating with the US.

6. Effects of a Backdown by Mirza: If Mirza's intentions become generally known in Pakistan, and if he were to abandon his plans for a takeover, his position would be seriously weakened and his future would be very uncertain.

SHERMAN KENT

FOR THE BOARD OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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